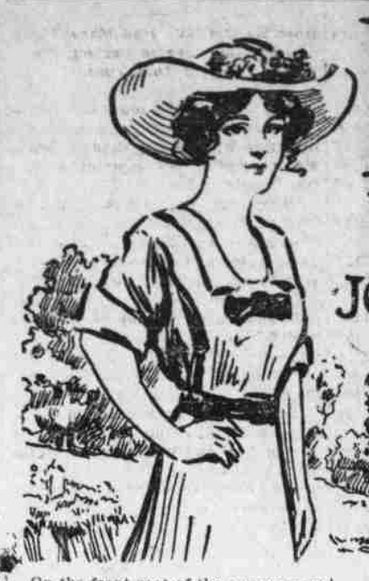
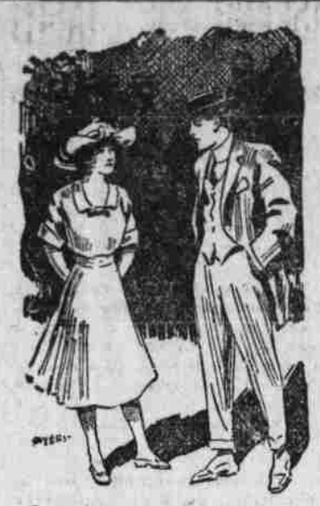
FRAN

BY

JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O·IRWIN·MYERS





SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs thither in search of him, laughs during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work, and a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and is seen by Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Fran's mother. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. Gregory explains that Fran is the daughter of a very dear friend who is dead. Fran agrees to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her arms. Fran declares the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tired of circus life and sought a home. Grace tells of seeing Fran come home after midnight with a man. She guesses part of the story and surprises the rest from Abbott. She decides to ask Bob Clinton to go to Springfield to investigate Fran's story. Fran enlists Abbott in her battle against Grace. Fran offers her services to Gregory as secretary during the temporary absence of Grace. The latter, hearing of Fran's purpose, returns and interrupts a touching scene between father and daughter. Fran goes fishing with Mrs. Gregory's brother. Abbott, whose retention as superintendent, is to be decided that day, finds her sitting alone in a buggy. He joins her and is discovered by Clinton and his sister.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

Fran snatched up the whip, and leaned over as if to lash the empty shafts. She had suddenly become the child again. "We must drive out of Sure-Enough Country, now. Time to get back to the Make-Believe World." She stood up, and the lap robe fell about her like green waves from which springs a laughing nymph.

Abbott still felt stunned. The crash of an ideal arouses the echo—"Is there no truth in the world?" But yes—Fran was here, Fran the adorable.

"Fran," he pleaded, "don't drive out of Sure-Enough Country. Wait long enough for me to tell you what you are to me."

"I know what I am to you," Fran retorted—"Git ap!"

"But what am I to you? Don't drive so fast—the trees are racing past like mad. I won't leave Sure-Enough Country until I've told you all—"

"You shall! No, I'll not let you take this whip—"

"I will take it—let go—Fran! Blessed darling Fran—"

She gripped the whip tightly. He

"We Must Drive Out of Sure Enough Country, Now."

could not loosen her hold, but he could keep her hand in his, which was just as well. Still, a semblance of struggling was called for, and that is why the sound of approaching wheels was drowned in laughter.

"Here we are!" Fran cried wickedly—"Make-Believe World of Every-Day, and some of its inhabitants . . ."

A surrey had come down the seldom-used road—had Miss Sapphira followed Abbott in order to discover him with Fran? The suspicion was not just, but his conscience seemed to turn color—or was it his face? In fact, Fran and Abbott were both rather red—caused, possibly, by their struggle over the whip.

On the front seat of the surrey were Miss Sapphira and Bob Clinton. On the back seat was Simon Jefferson whose hairy hand gripped a halter fastened to a riderless horse; the very horse which should have been between the shafts of the Gregory buggy.

Miss Sapphira stared at Abbott, speechless. So this is what he had meant by wanting the air unstrained by window-screens. Studying, indeed! Abbott, in his turn, stared speechlessly at the led horse.

Bob Clinton drew rein, and grasped his hay-colored mustache, inadequate to the situation. He glanced reproachfully at Abbott; the young fellow must know that his fate was to be decided this very night.

Abbott could not take his fill of the sight of Simon Jefferson whom he had fancied not far away, eyes glued on cork, hands in pockets to escape mosquitoes, sun on back, serenely fishing. He had supposed the horse grazing near by, enjoying semi-freedom with his grass. Now it seemed far otherwise. Miss Sapphira had even had him telephone Bob to bring her hither. With his own hands he had dug his pitfall.

Fran, suddenly aware of her ridiculous attitude, sat down and began to laugh.

Bob Clinton inquired: "Taking a drive, Abb?"

Miss Sapphira set her heavy foot upon her brother's unseemly jocularity. "Unfortunately," said Miss Sapphira, speaking with cold civility: "Mr. Jefferson had to come clear to town before he could recapture the horse. We were giving him a lift, and had no idea—no idea that we should find—should come upon— We are sorry to intrude." Had her life depended on it, Miss Sapphira could not have withheld a final touch—"Possibly you were not looking for Mr. Jefferson to come back so soon."

"Why," answered Abbott, stepping to the ground, "hardly so soon." At any rate, he felt that nothing was to be gained by staying in the buggy. "Is that the horse that belongs to this buggy? Let me hitch it up, Mr. Simon."

"This has been a terrible experience for me," growled Simon. All the same, he let Abbott do the work, but not as if he meant to repay him with gratitude.

"What was the matter with your horse, anyway?" Abbott cheerfully inquired.

Simon looked at him sourly. "Didn't Fran tell you that the horse got scared at her throwing rocks at my cork, and broke from the tree where I'd fastened it, and bolted for town?"

"Mr. Simon," said Fran innocently, "I don't believe the horse was mentioned once, while you were gone."

"It would be interesting to know what was," remarked Robert with humor so dry that apparently it choked him; he fell to coughing huskily.

Miss Sapphira gave him a look while he was struggling in his second paroxysm. It healed him by suggestion.

"Turn," said Miss Sapphira with becoming gravity. Robert, still under the influence of her thought-wave, solemnly drove her from the scene.

When the last buckle was clasped—"I came out here for a quiet peaceable fishing," said Simon. "I've spent my time hunting horses, and being afraid something might happen to Fran."

"Mr. Ashton took care of me," Fran said reassuringly.

Simon cried explosively, "And who took care of him?" He climbed in beside Fran and begrudgingly offered Abbott the imaginary space of a third occupant; but Abbott declared his preference for strolling.

"This has been a hard day for my heart," Simon grumbled, as he snatched up the whip vindictively.

The buggy rolled away.

"Mine, too," Abbott called after them emphatically.

Fran looked back at him, from over the lowered top. He saw her hand go to her bosom, then something fluttered in the air and fell in the grassy road. He darted after it as if it were a clue, showing the way to the princess' castle.

Perhaps it was. He pounced upon it—it was the queen of hearts.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Tamer of Lions.

The life of a household progresses, usually by insensible gradations, toward some great event, some climax, for the building of which each day has furnished its grain of sand. Today, Hamilton Gregory and Grace Noir were in the library, with nothing to indicate the approach of the great moment in their lives. It was Grace's impatience to drive Fran away even before Robert Clinton should bring the secret from Springfield, that precipitated matters.

"May I speak to you, Mr. Gregory?" She rose from the typewriter, slightly pale from sudden resolution.

Gregory never missed a movement of his secretary, but now he lifted his head ostensibly, to make his observation official.

"It's about Mr. Clinton," said Grace in a low voice, feeling her way to "that Fran."

He laid down his pen with a frown. Suddenly his missions in New York and Chicago became dead weights. Why Grace's "Mr. Clinton" instead of her customary "Brother Clinton?" It seemed to equip the school director with formidable powers. Gregory hastened to put him where he belonged.

"Oh! Something about Bob?" he asked casually.

Her look was steady, her voice humble: "Yes."

Her humility touched him profoundly. Knowing how unshakable were her resolutions, he made a desperate attempt to divert her mind: "That is settled, Miss Grace, and it's too late now to alter the decision, for the school board has already voted us a new superintendent—he has been sent his notification. Abbott Ashton is out of it, and it's all his fault. Bob was the only one to stand up for him, but he wasn't strong enough to hold his friend above the wave of popular opinion. Don't ask me to interview Bob for Abbott Ashton."

Grace calmly waited for this futility to pass; then with an air suggesting, "Now, shall we talk sensibly?" she resumed: "I approve the action of the school board. It did well in dismissing Professor Ashton. May I ask about Mr. Clinton? He urges me to marry him at once."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"It is not nonsense," Grace calmly responded. "He thinks I could make him a better man. We would work among the very poor in the Chicago settlements; maybe in one of your own missions. I often wonder if I couldn't do more good by personal contact with evil, than I can here with a person like Fran always clogging my efforts."

He started up. "Grace! You go away?—And—and leave me and my work?"

"Let Fran fill my position. You think she's the daughter of your boyhood friend—it would give her position and independence."

"No one can ever fill your place," Gregory claimed, with violence. His cheeks burned, lambent flames gleamed in his brown eyes. The effect was startlingly beautiful. At such exalted moments, thinking no evil because ceasing to think, grown all feeling, and it but an infinite longing, the glow of passion refined his face, always delicately sensitive. The vision of Grace, in giving herself to another, like a devouring fire consumed those temporary supports that held him above the shifting sands of his inner nature.

"Grace! But Grace! You wouldn't marry him!"

Because she found his beauty appealing to her as never before, her voice was the colder: "Anyone's place can be filled."

"You don't care!" he cried out desperately.

"For Mr. Clinton? Yes, I admire his persistence in seeking God, and his wish to work for mankind. God comes easier to some than to others, and I believe I could help—"

Gregory, aghast at her measured tone, interrupted: "But I mean that you don't care—don't care for me."

"For—" she began abruptly, then added in an odd whisper, "for you?"

"Yes, for me . . . don't care how much I suffer, or whether I suffer at all—I mean my work, if it suffers. If I lose you, Grace—"

"Oh, you will always have Fran."

"Fran!" he ejaculated. "So you don't care, Grace . . . It seems incredible because I care so much, Grace!" His accent was that of utter despair. "How can I lose you since you are everything? What would be left to live for? Nobody else sympathizes with my aims. Who but you understands? Oh, nobody will ever sympathize—ever care—"

"But, Mr. Gregory!" she began, confused. Her face had grown white.

"Grace!" he caught her hand, expecting it to be snatched away—the hand he had hourly admired at its work; he could feel its warmth, caress its shapeliness—and it did not resist. It trembled.

He was afraid to press it at first, lest it be wrenched free; and then, the next moment, he was clasping it convulsively. For the first time in her life, Grace did not meet his eyes.

"Grace!" he panted, not knowing what he was saying, "you care, I see you care for me—don't you?"

"No," she whispered. Her lips were dry, her eyes wide, her bosom heaving. Boundaries hitherto unchangeable, were suddenly submerged. Desperately, as if for her life, she sought to cling to such floating landmarks as duty, conscience, virtue—but they were drifting madly beyond reach.

"But you can't love him, can you?" Gregory asked brokenly.

Grace, with closed eyes, shook her head—what harm could there be in that confession?

"You won't go away, will you, Grace?" he pleaded, drawing her closer.

She shook her head, lips still parted, eyes still closed.

"Speak to me, Grace. Tell me you will never leave me."

Her lips trembled, then he heard a faint "Never!" Instantly neck and brow were crimsoned; her face, always superb, became enchanting. The dignity of the queen was lost in the woman's greater charm.

"Because you love me!" cried Gregory wildly. "I know you do, now, I know you do!" His arm was about her. "You will never leave me because you love me. Look at me, Grace!"

It seemed that her eyelids were held down by tyrannous thumbs. She tried to lift them, and tried again. Her face was irradiated by the sunrise glow of a master passion. Swiftly he kissed her lips, and as she remained motionless, he kissed her again and again.

Suddenly she exclaimed blindly: "Oh, my God!" Then she threw her arms about him, as he drew her to his bosom.

It was at that moment, as if Fate herself had timed the interruption, that Fran entered.

There was a violent movement of mutual repulsion on the part of Hamilton Gregory and his secretary. Fran stood very still, the sharpness of her profile defined, with the keenness of eyes and a slight grayness about the lips that made her look oddly small and old.

Fran was a dash of water upon raging fire. The effect was not extinguishment, but choking vapors. Bewildered, lost to old self-consciousness, it was necessary for Grace to readjust herself not only to these two, but to herself as well.

Fran turned upon her father, and pointed toward his desk. "Stand there!" she said, scarcely above a whisper.

Gregory burst forth in blind wrath: "How dare you enter the room in this manner? You shall leave this house at once, and for ever. . . . I should have driven you out long ago. Do you hear me? Go!"

Fran's arm was still extended. "Stand there!" she repeated.

Quivering in helpless fury, he stumbled to his desk, and leaned upon it. His face burned; that of Grace Noir was ghastly white.

"Now, you," said Fran, her voice vibrating as she faced the secretary, "go to your typewriter!"

Grace did not move.

Fran's eyes resembled cold stones with jagged points as her steady arm pointed: "Go! Stand where I tell you to stand. Oh, I have tamed lions before today. You needn't look at me so—I'm not afraid of your teeth."

Grace's fear was not inspired by dread of exposure, but by the realization that she had done what she could not have forgiven in another. But for the supreme moment she might never have realized the real nature of her feeling for her employer. She stood appalled and humiliated, yet her spirit rose in hot revolt because it was Fran who had found her in Gregory's arms. She glared at her defiantly.

"Yes," said Fran somberly, "that's my profession, lion-taming. I'm the 'World-Famous Fran Nonpareil.' Go to your typewriter, Grace Noir, I say—Go!"

Grace could not speak without filling every word with concentrated hate: "You wicked little spy, your evil nature won't let you see anything but evil in the fruits of your eavesdropping. You misjudge simply because it would be impossible for you to understand."

"I see by your face that you understand—pity you hadn't waked up long ago." Fran looked from one to the other with a dark face.

"I understand nothing of what you imagine you know," Grace said stammeringly. "I haven't committed a crime. Stop looking at me as if I had—do you hear?" Her tone was passionate: "I am what I have always been—" Did she say that to reassure herself? "What do you mean, Fran? I command you to put your suspicions in words."

"I have had them roar at me before today," cried Fran. "What I mean is that you're to leave the house this day."

"I shall not leave this house, unless Mr. Gregory orders it. It would be admitting that I've done wrong, and I am what I have always been. What you saw . . . I will say this much, that it shall never happen again. But nothing has happened that you think, little impostor, with your evil mind . . . I am what I have always been. And I'm going to prove that you are an impostor in a very short time."

Fran turned to Hamilton Gregory. "Tell her to go," she said threateningly. "Tell her she must. Order it. You know what I mean when I say she must go, and she needn't show her

"But You Can't Love Him, Can You?" Gregory Asked Brokenly.

claws at me. I don't go into the cage without my whip. Tell her to go."

He turned upon Fran, pushed to utter desperation. "No—you shall go!" he said between clenched teeth.

"Yes!" exclaimed Grace. It was a hiss of triumphant hate.

Fran lost control over herself. "Do you think, knowing what I know, that I'll stand quietly by and see you disgrace your wife as you disgraced . . . Do you think I'll let you have this Grace Noir for your . . . to be the third— Do you think I've come out of your past life to fold my hands? I tell you plainly that I'll ruin you with that secret before I'll let you have this woman."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Luxurious Wrap for Cold Weather

Underwood & Underwood

ONE of the full, short coats trimmed with fur which are unlike those of any previous season and immensely successful now, is shown in the picture. A muff of the fur used for a border about the bottom of the coat and appearing in the collar is worn with coats of this kind.

Costly broadtail fur is used in the body of this luxurious wrap, and Fitch fur trims it. Few wraps of broadtail are worn, in deference to a sentiment which has grown up against it. The handsomest plushes make up into wraps quite as beautiful, and are furnished with the same expensive furs in borders and muffs.

The heavier furs will not answer for wraps of this kind. Natural and dyed squirrel and ermine are used, and sealskin is ideal for ample garments which must not be too heavy. Instead of furs, handsome plushes are used for garments which are to be within a reasonable cost. These plushes in the best grades are high priced fabrics, but at that, much less costly than fur. There are cheaper grades that will look well and outlast the season. For wraps and outside garments nothing is more fashionable and more satisfactory than the plush imitations of fur, which are often so close in appearance to the original as to deceive the average eye.

The furs most favored for trimming coats are martin, skunk, civet cat, fitch and fox. These are the moderately long haired furs. Mink and sable and ermine (all growing higher in price constantly) are also employed. All furs are used in wide and narrow bandings, and in trimmings for costumes and millinery.

Sleeves in the new wraps are very roomy—the kimono and bat-wing styles prevailing. There is no trouble about crushing the bodice under fur wraps, because of the light weight of furs used in the body of the wraps, and there are ample sleeves and armseyes.

The hat worn with this pretty coat is of black velvet, one of few having a blocked crown. The trimming is a generous, fan-shaped spray of soft white feathers. There is an attractive and novel bag carried for the accommodation of the various belongings which vanity fair must needs have near at all times. The coin purse, handkerchief, powder puff, etc., placed in small compartments on the inside, do not distort the shape of this plain and elegant accessory. It is of knitted silk finished with silver rings and silver filagree monogram, and is carried by a silk cord.

Good furs, in garments or in trimmings, amount to a good investment, if well cared for. It is not likely that the cost will grow less; all the chances are that it will increase for several years. But furs must be cared for. The industrious moth will succeed in finding them when one thinks he is well shut out. Cold storage is therefore good for furs, but they may be protected by placing them in paper bags with moth balls, and in cedar chests. They should be examined occasionally, hung in the sun and beaten. The sunlight is death to moths.

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

HIGH COIFFURE PROMISES TO BE LEADING STYLE

HATLESS ladies at the horse show in New York appeared to be indulging in a go-as-you-please style of hair dressing. But coiffures were well taken care of. Waves and small curls reappeared, and there was a plentiful showing of high coiffures. Among

these were a few extremely high and really very pretty new ideas.

Changes are coming and, in fact, have arrived, but no definite style has established itself as a universal favorite yet. The liking for covering the top of the ear remains. But hair which has been encroaching upon the face, over the cheeks, is no longer good style.

The chances are that in the many new coiffures which have been designed for this season the ears will be wholly or partly covered. Light fringes over the forehead, middle and side parts, hair coiled high or low, but always waved, and little, short, full curls are in evidence everywhere. For popularity the high coiffure promises to be the winner in the race for favor.

Much depends upon the styles in millinery which are favored for spring. For evening wear, and especially where hats are removed, or not worn at all, Miladi may wave and curl and oil and pile up her crowning glory to her heart's content. Also her coiffure ornament or evening head dress may be as elaborate as any of which we have a history. Some of those designed for wear in Paris are said to be twenty-eight inches in height, which is something over two feet, you know. But the Parisiennes have a certain grace in carrying off extremes which is peculiar to them, their stock-in-trade for setting styles before the rest of the world. They are to be followed at a conservative distance.

Flower Boutonnieres.

The dark-hued costumes of winter must be enlivened by a touch of color, and this is often accomplished by the wearing of a colored boutonniere. Some very odd materials are used. Metal bouquets are artistically tinted, and medium-sized orchids made of metal and delicately tinted are pretty and frail, set off by dark green velvet leaves. Porcelain flowers are a decided novelty, dyed or painted in nature's own colors. Small flowers or fruits are seen in rich wintry tones that harmonize with the costume. Even oranges, lemons and grapes are pressed into service. White velvet gardenias are enhanced by glit buds. When combined with metal flowers they acquire distinction. Flowers are also made of a cloth that resembles patent leather and is called "oil cloth." Its softness makes it possible to twist it into realistic blossoms.

Fads and Fancies.

Jet is increasingly used as the season advances.

Last year's gown may be rejuvenated by a fichu.

The gown of one color may have two or three girdles.

There is a slash in almost every skirt worn by women.

For little girls the Russian blouse dresses are in the lead.

The smartest tailored costumes emphasize the belted coat.

Coming of Beads.

There is a great vogue in beads; they are used for embroideries, fringes, girdles, and all sorts of things in dress. Time was when sequins took their place, but now beads are back again in full possession, and such sequins as are used bear a stronger resemblance to beads than to scales.

SCIENTISTS TELL OF THE SEA

Some Facts Not Generally Known, But of Interest to the Man Who Admires Nature.

Not only is the sea the reservoir into which all rivers run, but it is the cistern that finally catches all the rain that falls, not merely upon its own surface, but upon the surface of the land and upon the roofs of our houses. It has been calculated that each year a layer of the entire sea fourteen feet thick is taken up into the clouds. This vapor is fresh, and, if all the water could be removed in the same way, none of it being returned, there would, it is figured, be left a layer of pure salt 230 feet high on the bed of the Atlantic. These figures are based upon the assumption that three feet of water contain one inch of salt, and that the average depth of the ocean is three miles.

At a depth of about 3,500 feet the temperature is uniform, varying but little between the poles and the equator. The colder water is below In many deep bays the water begins to freeze at the bottom before it does at the surface.

At that depth waves are not felt. The force of waves is in proportion to their height. It is said that the sea strikes upon certain rocks with the force of seventeen tons for each square yard.

The pressure of water increases with the depth. One mile down this pressure is reckoned at more than a ton to the square inch—in other words, more than 133 times the pressure of the atmosphere. The depth of the sea presents some interesting considerations. If, it is claimed by one authority, the Atlantic ocean were lowered 6,564 feet, it would be reduced to half its present width. If it were lowered a little more than three miles the result would be dry land all the way between Newfoundland and Ireland. If the Mediterranean were lowered 660 feet, Africa would be joined to Italy, and three separate seas would remain.

Wins Rich Husband.

A pretty girl, a bit of banana peel, a gallant young man to the rescue, and —Presto! there you have the ingredients of the romance.

That's the way it happened in the case of eighteen-year-old Rita Jacobs, of 9 West One Hundred and Twelfth street, the prettiest of a bevy of pretty sisters, and "Billy" Wallace, a wealthy merchant of Salisbury, S. C.

It all happened way down in South Carolina a little more than a year ago. Cupid, disguised as a hungry citizen, tossed the banana peel in front of Miss Jacobs, who was visiting friends in Salisbury. She slipped, but never fell. The strong arm of her future husband was there in the nick of time.

A few days later they left town and got married without telling anybody. Now they're planning to go back to the Sunny South. Meanwhile, they're at home at 134 West One Hundred and Sixteenth street.—New York American.

Cruel and Inhuman.

"How dare you advertise that you do painless dentistry?" "Did I hurt you, miss?" "Absolute torture. You talked for five minutes at a time when I couldn't interrupt."—Puck.

WORTHY OF EMPIRE BUILDER

Cecil Rhodes' Magnificent Tomb Near Spot Which Was Scene of Historic Meeting.

After Cecil Rhodes' death, on March 26, 1902, his body was taken to the Matopos hills in South Africa and interred there near the spot known as World's View. By the terms of his will the land adjacent was set aside as a burial place for men who had deserved well of South Africa.

The Rhodes tomb is near the spot where he had his famous meeting with the chieftains of the Matabele tribes on August 24, 1896. At that time the Matabeles were about to go to war against the British, and Rhodes, fuly aware of this, rode into their territory, accompanied by only two men. The risk that he took was enormous, but the result fully justified it. When the Matabeles heard of his coming their chiefs sought him in his camp and laid their grievances before him. He promised to do what he could to have them righted.

"Now, is it peace or war?" he asked, and the chiefs, as one man, cast their spears on the ground, signifying that they were for peace. While riding away from the scene of this historic meeting Rhodes is said to have remarked to his companions: "It is such things that make life worth living."

Glass in Japan.

It is only during a comparatively short time that the Japanese have glass as occidentals know it. When the first railroads were built, passengers in the coaches often put their heads through the glass, supposing the frames of the windows to be pasted pictures on the glass to call attention to the fact that a solid substance was behind them. The masses of the Japanese today do not know the mirror as it is known in the west. The richer people have one mirror, indeed, but usually the glass used in the mirrors sold to the populace is not quicksilvered, being merely well polished. As for cut glass is practically unknown in and glass drinking cups Harper's Weekly